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FARMERS' BULLETIN - 1115
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF FOWLS FOR EXHIBITION



THIS BULLETIN has been written briefly and in simple terms for beginners, and especially for members of Boys' and Girls' Poultry Clubs.

Poultry exhibitions are not only of educational value but encourage the desire to excel in producing a high quality of stock.

Contribution from the Bureau of Animal Industry

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SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF FOWLS FOR EXHIBITION.

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VALUE OF POULTRY EXHIBITIONS.

THE EXHIBITING of poultry by the members of boys' and girls' poultry clubs should be considered the final achievement of the year's work, showing, as it would, what was accomplished during that period by the club members. Poultry shows, whether held as exclusive exhibits of poultry or in connection with a State, county, or community fair, are not only of much interest to the public but likewise play an important part in the development of the poultry industry. In order to win at a poultry show, fowls must conform to the standard requirements for the breed. Other things being equal, such birds are desirable both as producers and as breeders.

Members of poultry clubs should therefore be eager to exhibit their fowls whenever the occasion presents itself, to put forth every effort to demonstrate to the public what they have accomplished, and, likewise, to compete among themselves for prizes and awards. The honor and distinction of winning a prize are of greater value than the amount of money actually won. There should exist a keen sense of rivalry and competition between club members to see who has produced the best birds.

SELECTING THE FOWLS.

The selection of the fowls to be shown should begin soon after the chicks are hatched, for unless the chicks are properly grown and fed that they may mature into typical representatives of their breed they can not be considered as likely candidates for the exhibition. The first actual selection of the birds to be shown should be made by carefully observing the fowls as they appear in the yard or on

range. This should happen not less than a month, or better two months, before sending them to the show. While making such observations members of the poultry club should keep in mind the general characteristics of the breed of the birds that are to be exhibited.

Every flock will include individual birds that are outstanding in their appearance, that possess the desirable type for the breed, as well as desirable color of plumage. These better-appearing birds should be caught and carefully examined in detail for undercolor, surface color, and for defects and desirable points described in the American Standard of Perfection.¹ In choosing the candidates for



FIG. 1.—A poultry-club exhibit. With the development of club work there is much competition which results in many entries of excellent fowls.

the show it should be kept in mind that no fowl is perfect, and that the selection is largely a matter of picking those with the least defects and the most desirable characteristics.

Birds that possess absolute disqualifications for the breed or variety to which they belong should not under any circumstances be sent to the show, for fowls having these disqualifications will not even be considered for a place among the winners. In addition to the standard requirements as called for, consideration in making the final decision should be given to the health, vigor, and general appearance of the bird.

¹ The American Standard of Perfection is a book published by the American Poultry Association, Fort Wayne, Ind.

PREPARATION.

Training and conditioning.—Boys and girls should realize that the bird that has been properly trained and prepared will stand a better chance of winning a prize than another bird equally good, but which is wild or easily frightened, or whose plumage is soiled or dirty.

The birds selected should be removed from the rest of the flock and each bird placed in an exhibition coop for at least a portion of each day. Fowls so confined will become accustomed to the coop. Handling them—that is, removing them from the coop each day—will have the effect of making them tame. In handling the birds and



FIG. 2.—A club member examining the undercolor of a Rhode Island Red pullet.

removing and returning them to and from the coops, move quietly and handle the birds gently so as not to frighten them. When handling fowls, hold them as shown in figure 2. Examine the plumage so that the fowl will become accustomed to such movements when being handled by the judge. Likewise, attempt to compose the bird by smoothing and stroking the wattles gently; this seems to have a soothing effect on the fowls, and when done frequently and properly they come to look for it when one approaches the coop.

Those that are to be exhibited should not be confined to the exhibition coops for too great a period, as long, continuous cooping may cause them to get out of condition and therefore unfit for show. A

satisfactory plan is to confine the birds for a part of each day or every other day alternately up to a few days before sending them to the show, when they should be confined until ready to ship.

Washing the plumage.—All white varieties of fowls, such as the White Leghorns and White Plymouth Rocks, and those having considerable white plumage, such as Columbian Plymouth Rocks and Light Brahmans, and even the buff varieties, should be washed in order to make the best possible showing when exhibited. Dark-colored fowls, such as Rhode Island Reds and Barred Plymouth Rocks, need not be washed unless their plumage is considerably soiled. The head, feet, and shanks, however, of all varieties should be properly cleaned as described later. The actual washing of birds

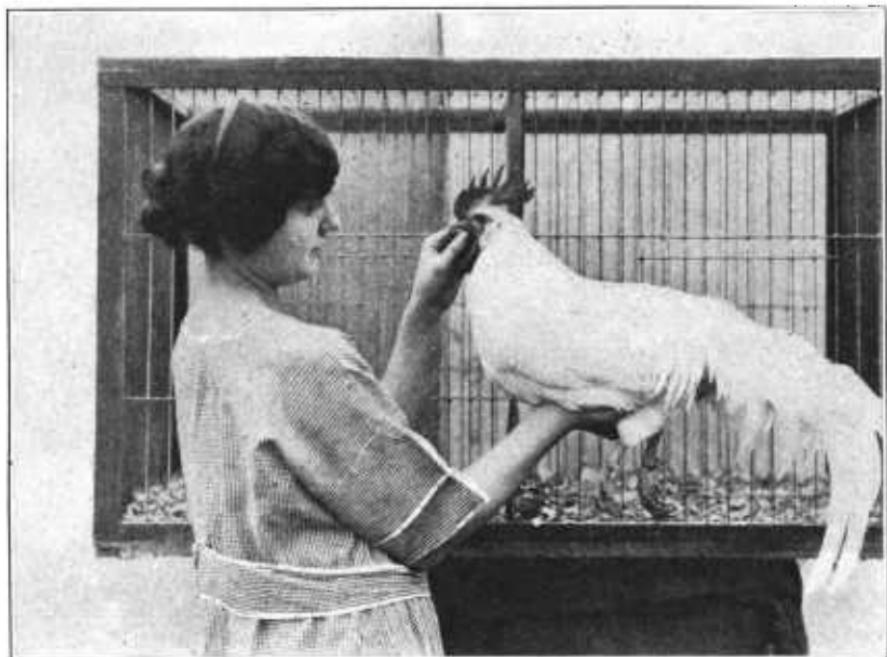


FIG. 3.—This poultry-club member is closely examining the head parts of her White Leghorn male for defects.

is not a difficult operation, and with a little practice boys and girls will soon become proficient in the work. Before attempting to wash the birds that are to be shown, select from the flock two or three fowls that are not going to be exhibited and wash them as described herein so as to gain confidence and practice before washing those that are to be shown.

The birds should be washed in a room or building where the temperature is from 70° to 80° F. and in a place that is free from drafts. The washing should be done in the morning so that the birds may have time enough to dry completely before night.

Before washing the birds place the exhibition coops a short distance from a stove or other source of heat so that the birds will dry off readily after being washed. Place clean shavings in the coop, and cover the top, back, and sides of the coop with cloth or paper to prevent a draft. The front of the coop should be left open. Get three or, better, four tubs and arrange them on a bench or platform of convenient height. The water in the first tub is to be used for the actual washing and cleaning; the second, third, and fourth tubs are used for rinsing or removing all the soap. Each tub should contain water enough to cover the body of the bird when immersed, or in other words, it should be about two-thirds full. If possible to obtain it, clean rain water should be used. Hard water will not produce so satisfactory results as soft water.



FIG. 4.—The feet and shanks should be examined for stubs or small feathers, which are disqualifications when found on breeds that should have clean, unfeathered shanks.

Any pure white toilet soap may be used for washing. The water in the first two tubs should be heated to a temperature that will be comfortable to the hand, while the water in the third and fourth tubs may be slightly cooler. Before beginning to wash the fowl, soap the water in the first tub well, so that there will be plenty of suds floating on the surface; next, wash the face, comb, wattles, shanks, and feet of the fowl by scrubbing these parts with a small nailbrush and plenty of soap and water. Before actually rubbing the feathers of the fowl be sure that the water has thoroughly penetrated all sec-

tions of the plumage so that the bird is soaked to the skin. Next, apply the soap by working up, with the fingers, a good lather through all sections of the plumage of the fowl.

Rub the lather with the feathers instead of against them. A small sponge helps considerably in applying the lather and in cleaning the wing and tail feathers. Should the feathers, especially those of the tail and wings, be very dirty the nailbrush can be effectively



FIG. 5.—Washing, when properly done, adds greatly to the appearance of the birds.

used. If after the first washing the plumage seems still to be dirty it will be advisable to shampoo the feathers thoroughly a second time before transferring the fowl to the second tub. Remove as much of the soap as possible from the bird before immersing it in the second tub. importance of com-
the feathers in the
the fourth tubs.
in the feathers it

The operator should realize the
pletely removing all the soap from
second, third, and (when used)
When even a trace of soap is left
will cause them to appear streaked



FIG. 6.—Rinse the birds thoroughly so as to remove all the soap after washing.

and to be matted together when dry. In rinsing the feathers be sure to see that the water penetrates all parts of the plumage. After four or five fowls have been washed, change the water in all the tubs before washing additional fowls.

Drying the fowls.—On removing the fowl from the final tub remove the surplus water from the feathers by blotting the surface of the feathers with a Turkish towel. Do not under any circumstances rub

the feathers with the towel; for it may do considerable damage to the plumage. Next, place the bird in one of the coops previously described. Should the fowl appear cold and shiver when placed in the coop move it closer to the stove or other source of heat. Do not leave the coop close to the stove for any length of time, as it may cause the feathers to dry too thickly, in which case they are apt to curl instead of drying smooth and straight. Should the bird, on coming from the bath, appear to be too warm, move the coop farther from the stove. The birds after being washed should be kept in this room at a temperature of about 70° F. for at least 12 hours before being shipped.

The final preparation.—When the fowl is thoroughly dry, examine the shanks and feet closely to make sure that no dirt remains under

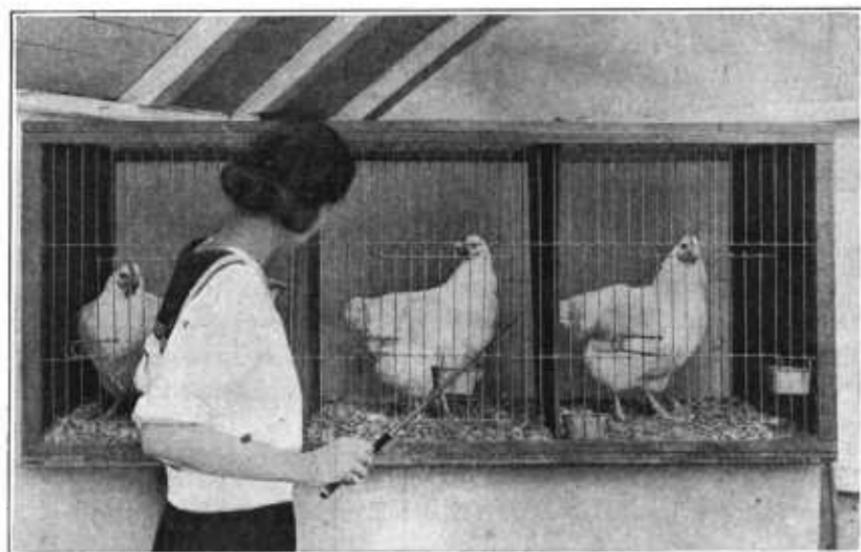


FIG. 7.—This club member is giving her birds a final inspection before sending them to the show.

or around the scales on the legs. Such particles of dirt as do remain may easily be removed with a toothpick. It is well at this time also to moisten a small cloth with a little sweet oil or olive oil or vaseline and rub it on the shanks, wattles, ear lobes, face, and comb. This will help considerably to bring out the true color of these parts. Do not apply too much oil or vaseline to the head or shanks, as it may soil the plumage.

SHIPPING THE FOWLS.

Under no circumstances should a bird be sent to an exhibit or show in a poorly constructed shipping coop. Many desirable and likely fowls have been rendered unfit for show by shipping them in a coop that was either too small or poorly constructed. Coops for

the purpose can either be purchased for a reasonable amount or be constructed by following the plans given in Farmers' Bulletin 1107.

When a slat-topped shipping coop is used, such as is shown in figure 3, Farmers' Bulletin 1107, tack a piece of muslin on the inside of the top so as to keep out the dirt and, in winter, to keep out the cold. Do not use a cloth that is so heavy and thick that it will cut off the ventilation.

Place a small amount of clean hay, or preferably clean straw or shavings free from dust, in the bottom of the coop. A cup or can for feed can be fastened securely in one of the corners of the coop about halfway between the top and the bottom. Feed is unnecessary in the coop if the birds are shipped only a short distance or if they are not to be in the coop for more than a day. When feed is provided such grain as whole corn or wheat is most satisfactory. Water placed in the coop is likely to be spilled out and to soil the plumage. A satisfactory substitute can be obtained by tying a mangel beet in one of the corners of the coop, that the fowls may pick it and secure moisture enough to satisfy their thirst.

A tag or card plainly marked with the address to which the coop is shipped, together with a return address, should be tacked or pasted on the outside where it can be plainly seen.

The coop should be closed securely so that it will not come open while being handled in transit. Provision, however, should be made for the coop to be opened readily on arrival at the showroom. Under no circumstances should a coop be so securely fastened that it will have to be broken in order to remove the bird. When that is the case the coop is often rendered unfit for returning the fowl.

ATTENDING THE SHOW.

Whenever possible, club members should make it a point to attend poultry shows or fairs, especially when their birds are being exhibited. Such a trip will not only be full of interest, but will likewise enable members to see their own birds on display and also those belonging to other members, which are competing with theirs for a prize. Furthermore, such a trip will afford each member an opportunity to compare his birds with those being shown by adult poultrymen; and, again, members often become acquainted with such poultrymen at these shows and get valuable information as to the breeding and mating of their birds.

**FARMERS' BULLETINS SPECIALLY USEFUL FOR MEMBERS OF
BOYS' AND GIRLS' POULTRY CLUBS.**

- 1105. Care of Mature Fowls.
- 1106. Incubation of Hens' Eggs.
- 1107. Brood Coops and Appliances.
- 1108. Care of Baby Chicks.
- 1109. Preserving Eggs.
- 1110. Lice, Mites, and Cleanliness.
- 1111. Management of Growing Chicks.
- 1112. Culling for Eggs and Market.
- 1113. Poultry Houses.
- 1114. Common Poultry Diseases.
- 1116. The Selection and Care of Poultry Breeding Stock.

OTHER FARMERS' BULLETINS ON POULTRY RAISING.

- 287. Poultry Management.
 - 528. Hints to Poultry Raisers.
 - 574. Poultry House Construction.
 - 585. Natural and Artificial Incubation of Hens' Eggs.
 - 624. Natural and Artificial Brooding of Chickens.
 - 656. The Community Egg Circle.
 - 682. A Simple Trap Nest for Poultry.
 - 684. Squab Raising.
 - 697. Duck Raising.
 - 767. Goose Raising.
 - 791. Turkey Raising.
 - 801. Mites and Lice on Poultry.
 - 806. Standard Varieties of Chickens: I. The American Class
 - 830. Shipping Eggs by Parcel Post.
 - 849. Capons and Caponizing.
 - 858. The Guinea Fowl.
 - 889. Back-Yard Poultry Keeping.
 - 898. Standard Varieties of Chickens: II. The Mediterranean and Continental Classes.
 - 957. Important Poultry Diseases.
 - 1046. Illustrated Poultry Primer.
 - 1052. Standard Varieties of Chickens: III. The Asiatic, English, and French Classes.
 - 1067. Feeding Hens for Egg Production.
- Bureau of Chemistry Circular 61, revised, How to Kill and Bleed Market Poultry.

For copies of these bulletins or further information on poultry raising, write to your poultry-club leader, or to the Animal Husbandry Division, Bureau of Animal Industry,

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
WASHINGTON, D. C.**